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THE PRACTICAL TENDENCIES OF BERGSONISM.

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II.

IN the former part of this study we began an attempt to distinguish those elements in M. Bergson's teaching which suggest ethical consequences, and to observe how, by some of his disciples, though never quite explicitly by himself, those consequences have actually been drawn out. The general method of a Bergsonian ethics,—a method sanctioned by M. Bergson's own words,—would consist, as we have seen, in regarding the "intuition of pure duration" as not only the means to metaphysical insight, but also the highest and most valuable form of human experience. We found, however, that several different, and for the most part incongruous, accounts are given of the nature of this intuition; and that, consequently, as many types of ethical tendency may be expected to be generated, or at least reënforced, by Bergsonism, as there are distinct versions of the character of the intuitional experience. Four such versions we have already noted: two, and those more significant than any thus far considered, remain to be examined.

(5) The most celebrated and perhaps the most nearly novel teaching of Bergson,—next to the doctrine of the "indivisibility of duration," with which it is entirely incompatible,—is that of the "creative" character of the evolutionary process. This, though it has, in Bergson's most widely read book the appearance of being a scientific generalization based upon biological evidence, ultimately rests upon another,—yet nominally the same,—supposed intuition of that mysterious inner essence of our psychic existence to which this philosopher is forever trying to recall us. The conception of creative evo-

lution depends upon an identification of all that actually undergoes evolution with life, of life with consciousness, and of consciousness with that experience of the ineffable qualitative uniqueness of each moment as it comes, which was first insisted upon by Bergson in the concluding chapters of his first book. "Deep-seated psychic states," we were there told, "are radically heterogeneous to one another, and it is impossible that any two of them should be quite alike, since they are two different moments of a life-story." It is for this reason that (I quote now from "Creative Evolution") "consciousness is essentially free, indeed, is freedom itself." For the life and action of the conscious being in the *present* is always, at least in some degree, unbound by the past. Doubtless the conventional law of causality is absolutely true; given the same conditions, you will always have the same effects. But in the case of consciousness the same conditions never are given twice over. Time is essentially "inventive."

This insight, to be sure, we are repeatedly told, is to be gained only by abandoning all the modes of thought which have reference to action; and it would therefore seem to have no pertinency to practical problems. Moreover, the original argument for the reality of this freedom implied that one moment of a conscious being's existence is no more free than another; so that "creation" is not an ideal but a fact, a power which we possess and need not choose. But we must for the time being try to forget both of these considerations. The secret of happiness in Bergsonism lies in knowing just when to ignore the parts of the doctrine which it is temporarily inopportune to remember. If, then, the idea of "time as inventive" be applied to the case of one who is choosing a course of action, it is evident that he is ever face to face with unprecedented situations; and that he can accordingly never rely wholly upon teachings drawn from past situations to guide him in the present. Some bold creative stroke must be attempted. And,—according to

this account of the "intuition,"—it is in those crises of experience in which the will confronts the yet indeterminate future in full consciousness of the uniqueness of the present, and by its own act of freedom gives reality to some new and original form of being,—it is in such crises that we apprehend most intimately and profoundly the essential nature of life, and experience its highest worth. But the "intellect" is wholly alien to this creative function. For "the intellect is always seeking to reconstitute, and to reconstitute with materials already given. It, therefore, lets what is new in each moment of history escape. It does not admit the unforeseeable. It rejects all creation. . . . It will always neglect the element of novelty in the free act and always substitute for action itself an artificial imitation, a mere approximation to action, obtained by compounding the old with the old, the same with the same."

It is this conception (taken together with the general anti-intellectualism of Bergson) which constitutes the principal point of affinity between his doctrine and that social philosophy of revolutionary syndicalism which has been formulated chiefly by M. Georges Sorel. The relation is one rather of affinity than dependence. M. Sorel is a peculiarly original and idiosyncratic mind; if (in his syndicalist phase) he could be called a disciple of anyone, it would, I suppose, be rather of Marx than of Bergson. Syndicalist socialism, indeed, as an active working-class movement, M. Sorel appears to regard, for curiously Marxian reasons, as the parent rather than the child of Bergsonism. For one of the two legacies from the author of "*Das Kapital*" which he most cherishes is the economic interpretation of history; and he is insatiable in the application of this universal solvent to all classes of historic phenomena. Philosophic and scientific movements must, then, like all else, be regarded as consequences of industrial conditions or economic theories prevailing at the time of their origination. Thus Darwin's natural-selection hypothesis is the result of

the glorification of unrestricted competition by the *laissez-faire* economics; the adoption of Lamarckianism by the American geologist Cope (one of our writers more famous in other countries than in his own) is a reflection in biological terms of "the life of a people in which every man who has a genuine determination to succeed finds favorable conditions for rising in the world." Bergson's philosophy too, then, must have its economic explanation; and the explanation is that it translates into rather queer pseudo-biological language "the revolutionary dispositions of to-day,"—which "are at once free and stable because they arise from the deep consciousness of persons who make no pretensions of raising themselves above the condition of the people. It is precisely of this freedom that the philosophy of M. Bergson treats."¹ In the opinion of the syndicalist writer, therefore, M. Bergson, while he is a "genius who comes to teach his contemporaries to put their ideas in order," is important rather as a sociologist *sans le savoir*, than as a metaphysician or biologist. His work would have gained immensely in clearness and directness if he had dealt with the evolution of human industry directly. His arguments are "terribly obscure" until you put them back into economic terms. But when his philosophy is taken as an interpretation of "the great social movements which demand a large liberty," it proves "brilliantly illuminating."

It is not, however, any more necessary to look upon the Bergsonian philosophy as a product of syndicalism than upon syndicalism as a product of the Bergsonian philosophy. The two, no doubt, are merely children of the same *Zeitgeist*. Some kinship in spirit, at all events, they undeniably manifest; and it is clear that M. Sorel gained from Bergson's writings much encouragement in certain tendencies to which he was already inclined.

¹ I quote from Sorel's series of articles on "L'évolution créatrice" in *Le Mouvement Socialiste*, 1907-8. The passage above, Vol. XXII, p. 270.

With some of the elements of Bergsonism which we have hitherto noted here, M. Sorel assuredly has never felt any sympathy. In his ethical temper,—so far at least as the life of the individual is concerned,—he has always been essentially a rigorist; he can have little taste for M. Chide's god Proteus or M. Bazaillas's languishing æstheticism. The gospel of syndicalism, as preached by him, is eminently a Gospel of Work. The part of the industrial process in which he is interested is not distribution but production,—and production not as a mere means to consumption, but as an activity good in itself. His chief concern has been for the development in the working-class of a genuine *morale des producteurs*. "He has had," as M. Guy-Grand has said, "no other aim than to maintain or to arouse in the proletariat the feeling of right, of dignity, of the respect due to labor, to love, to the family." On the matter of sexual ethics he has uttered what to many French revolutionaries must appear a hard saying: "Society will become more just only in the measure in which it becomes more chaste. I think there is no truth more certain than this." It is Proudhon, among his socialistic predecessors, who is closest akin to Sorel in moral feeling.

No mere 'mobilism' then, but the conception of the freedom and discontinuity of those creative acts by which the world is made new: this it is which, first and foremost, the philosopher of syndicalism finds congenial in Bergson's teaching. He, too, so far as he is a Bergsonian philosopher, has endeavored to recapture through intuition the essence of *le moi profond*, "to look within and discover what it is that exists at the bottom of our consciousness"; and he too has assumed that by a return to this fundamental form of consciousness the supremely valuable mode of human experience is to be gained. And that one, out of Bergson's many, ways of describing the nature of intuition, which was adopted by Sorel, is summed up in the following passage of "Les données immédiates de la conscience":

[We reach the deeper self] by apprehending our inner states as living things, incessantly in process of formation, as states refractory to all measurement. . . . But the moments in which we thus resume possession of ourselves are rare, and it is for this reason that we are but rarely free. Ordinarily we live outside ourselves, we perceive only the colorless phantom of our true Self; . . . we *are acted* rather than act ourselves. To act freely is to resume possession of oneself, to put oneself back into pure duration. . . . [To understand what this means we must] carry ourselves back in thought to those moments of our lives when we made some grave decision, moments of a unique kind, which will never be repeated, any more than the past phases of a nation's life will ever come back again. . . . If our action [in such a moment] was pronounced by us to be free, it was because the relation of this action to the state from which it issued could not be expressed by any law. There could here be no question of foreseeing the act beforehand, or of reasoning about the possibility of the contrary action, once the deed is done.²

To gain the saving intuition, then, means, for Sorel, to experience this sort of liberty; and we experience it "when we make an effort to create within ourselves a new man, by breaking the historical framework which shuts us in."

Such is the version of the Bergsonian intuition in which the philosopher of syndicalism found reënforcement of his conviction,—reached primarily, I am sure, on quite other grounds, grounds of political and economic experience,—that the hackneyed catch-word of many of the social democrats, and of the moderates of all schools,—“evolution, not revolution,”—needs to be exactly reversed. We must not try to build the society of the future out of the beggarly elements of old institutions. Only in a radical break with the past can there be salvation. For it is, on good Bergsonian principles, “an absurdity to propose to calculate the future by means of the supposed tendencies of the past.” What the past has left of external, finished products which can be used as tools for future use, we do well, indeed, to conserve. Sorel here converts Bergson's favorite antithesis of matter and life into the economic contrast between machines

² Bergson, “Données immédiates,” 7th ed., p. 178; cited in part by Sorel, “Réflexions sur la violence,” 3d ed., p. 72.

and products, on the one hand, and the process of production, on the other. Machinery, past inventions, including therein works of artistic genius,—these are dead, though by no means valueless. Materialized in definite form, they may be kept for the service to which they can be put. But the life of a people is not a ready-made thing, but a creative process; and what is at the heart of this process, its controlling factor (here comes in again the Marxian element) is the organization of economic production. This, then, and with it the entire social life and moral spirit of the people, must be wholly renewed. And in attempting this task of fresh creation, we must not try to infer what can be and what ought to be from what has been. Men must

off-cast

Their moorings from the habitable past,
And venture chartless on the sea
Of storm-engendering liberty.

It has already been made evident that the syndicalist theory is, in great part, an original and paradoxical synthesis of Marxian and Bergsonian ideas. This combination appears in one of its most curious phases in the form of a conjunction of the Marxian doctrine of the necessity for maintaining a proletarian class-consciousness and class-struggle, with the Bergsonian anti-intellectualism. The real enemies of the working-class, as portrayed by the syndicalist, are not so much the capitalists as the 'intellectuals'; the writers in *Le Mouvement Socialiste* seem, as a rule, to shrink with greater aversion from a professor than from a plutocrat. "My only originality," M. Sorel somewhat too modestly observes, "consists in having maintained that the proletariat can free itself without needing to have recourse to the *professionnels bourgeois de l'intelligence*." His great concern has been "to put the proletariat on guard against the invasion of the ideas and the *moeurs*" of the class which is its enemy, "to free the common people from the

superstition du livre." For the 'producing class' is still relatively uncorrupted by intelligence; it retains much of that 'spontaneity,' that freshness and purity of instinct, that capacity for actually *making* things, and that incapacity for talking about them, which constitute the true values of existence. The fault with the *bourgeoisie* is less that it is greedy than that it is denaturalized by being intellectualized. Its whole habit of mind is profoundly vitiated by certain 'conventional lies' of modern culture, —lies which, for the most part, have hitherto been seriously opposed only by the religious defenders of supernaturalism, by such protestants against the "illusion of rationalism" as Pascal and Newman, with whom M. Sorel has from the first manifested a lively sympathy.³ For three centuries the educated classes have been learning the cult of positive science; but "this science, of the marvellous achievements of which the *bourgeoisie* is wont to boast, has no such certainty as those who live by the professional exploitation of science would have people suppose." The syndicalist, therefore, must devote himself to "ruining the prestige of bourgeois culture," and to establishing a sort of spiritual quarantine about the common people to save them from the infection of academic ideas and ideals.

This, of course, constitutes the radical difference between the program of social democracy (whether orthodox or revisionist) and the program of syndicalism; it explains why, in its method, syndicalism substitutes 'direct' for political action, and why, in its aim, it substitutes a loose federation of local groups of workers for the highly organized bureaucracy of the Socialist State.

³ It is interesting to observe that Sorel likes to dwell upon the affinities between these writers and Bergson. "More than one point of connection," he remarks, "might be established between Bergson and Pascal" ("Les illusions du progrès," p. 51). "No one can read Newman without being struck by the analogies between his thought and that of Bergson. Those who like to connect the history of ideas with ethnological considerations will not fail to notice that Newman was of Jewish descent" ("Réflexions sur la violence," p. 45).

Social democracy has always sought to benefit the oppressed classes by distributing to all more or less uniform slices of bourgeois culture, well-being, and leisure. Its method for bringing this about has been to segregate the leaders of the proletariat and send them to sit in parliament side by side with the leaders of bourgeois democracy. Not only has the method been a failure,—because those leaders through this association have always acquired bourgeois ideas, tastes, and ambitions, and eventually, in one fashion or another, have betrayed the cause they represented; but, even if this had not been the case, the end pursued would have been a bad one. Accordingly, M. Sorel,—himself a person eminently professorial in type,—has put forth many books, thick-fringed with foot notes, and crowded with remarkably various learning and ingenious argument, to preserve the proletariat from a debauching contact with culture.

It is the same purpose which explains Sorel's defense of 'violence.' The attempts of benevolent reformers to bring about social pacification, the slow but constant yielding of one position after another by the prosperous classes,—partly through fear, partly through a sentimental humanitarianism,—these are tendencies which seem to the syndicalist wholly ominous. They might conceivably end in an almost complete surrender by the propertied class of their present economic advantages; but that consummation, so realized, would be a disaster. For it would mean that, in the process, the two classes had been more and more brought together in coöperative effort, had little by little been merged in one another, under the softening influence of sympathy and good nature. But the effect of this would be that the distinctive virtues of the proletariat,—or at least the virtues potentially distinctive of a proletariat,—would be lost; the people would be corrupted and enervated by bourgeois vices and, what are worse, bourgeois ideals. The hidden treasure of moral force which the working-class unconsciously carries with it is the great hope of the future;

and this would be melted away under the warmth of an era of good feeling. Violence, therefore,—by which Sorel chiefly means strikes,—must be resorted to, in order to check the tendency of the *bourgeoisie*, to kill the proletarian spirit by kindness:

Not only can proletarian violence render certain the future revolution, but it also seems the only means now at the disposal of the European nations, brutalized by humanitarianism, for recovering their former energy. This violence forces capitalism to occupy itself exclusively with its material concerns and tends to restore to it those bellicose qualities which it formerly possessed. . . . The danger which threatens the future of the world may be escaped if the proletariat . . . succeeds, through violence, in consolidating once more the division of society into classes. . . . Such violence is perhaps not the most effective means for obtaining immediate material benefits; but it can save the world from barbarism.⁴

In such a class struggle the motive will not be, as it is in the minds of many social democrats, envy of the rich; it will simply be the determination of the proletariat to maintain its distinctive character and separate existence. To do this it needs a good enemy to fight; and, for the sake of all concerned, it must not allow its enemy, through a weak complaisance, to cease to act as an enemy should.

But the most original contribution of Sorel to the theory of syndicalist agitation is the doctrine of the necessity for providing the popular mind with a 'myth,' if it is to be stirred to revolutionary and creative action. This too is formulated in Bergsonian categories. For the first step in 'creation' consists in fashioning the image of "a wholly artificial world, projected into the future, and to be formed by movements which depend on us." "Thus," adds the syndicalist philosopher, "our [Bergsonian] liberty becomes perfectly intelligible." Now, in order that the masses of the people may become creatively impassioned, they must have put before them a vivid, concrete, pictorial, comparatively definite representation of a future event which touches them all profoundly and is entirely within their comprehension. Ex-

⁴"Réflexions sur la violence," pp. 120, 130.

amples of the efficacy of such myths are to be seen in Jewish messianism and in the millennial expectations of the early Christians.⁵ The 'social myth' which syndicalism offers to the masses of to-day is the project of a general strike. Only,—and here Bergsonian intuitionism comes opportunely to syndicalism's aid,—argument concerning the practicability of a general strike, or concerning its probable outcome, is rigorously forbidden. "When one places oneself on the ground of myths, one is beyond the reach of all refutation. The fact has led many to say that socialism is a sort of religion. And, in fact, it has long since been noted that religious convictions are independent of criticism. From this some have supposed that it is possible to draw the conclusion that all which professes to be above science is a religion. . . . But Bergson has shown us that it is not religion alone which occupies the region of the deeper consciousness; the revolutionary myths have their place there by the same title. The arguments of Yves Guyot against socialism, regarded as a religion, seem to me to rest upon an imperfect knowledge of the new psychology."⁶ At times M. Sorel seems to mean by this appeal to the 'deeper consciousness' merely that the general strike will be one of those unprecedented creative acts, the possibilities and consequences of which can never be fully determined beforehand by considering merely the ways in which things have happened in the past. But he more particularly connects this detail of the syndicalistic scheme with another aspect of Bergson's philosophy, namely, with the doctrine of the "interpenetration and fusion" of the moments of real duration. It would indeed, Sorel observed, "be difficult to cite many other examples which could so perfectly exhibit the value of the doctrines of the celebrated professor." For in the state of mind of a working man dreaming of the general strike we have realized

⁵In early Christianity, M. Sorel has a peculiar interest. It (as he conceives it) served him for a model for much in the syndicalist propaganda.

⁶"*Réflexions sur la violence*," p. 49.

that instantaneous co-presence and interpenetration of diverse elements which is the essence of 'duration.' It is a method of presenting the socialist ideal which has all the advantages that a "*total* knowledge, according to the teaching of Bergson, has, in contrast with analysis." It sums up and fuses in an indivisible moment of present consciousness all the dearest memories of the past of the working-class. For "strikes have engendered in the proletariat its noblest, its deepest, its most potent feelings; and so the idea of the general strike, bringing all these feelings together in one, gives to each its maximum of intensity. Appealing to the poignant memories of past individual conflicts, it infuses with an intense vitality all the details of the present complex of consciousness. We thus gain that intuition of socialism which language can never give us in an altogether clear form; and we gain it in an instantaneously perceived whole. It is the perfect knowledge of the Bergsonian philosophy."

Unhappily, however, for his myth, the founder of the syndicalist philosophy was not wholly rid of intellectuality; and it seems pretty apparent, between the lines, that he has seen as clearly as any old-school socialist that the first and most certain result of a real and persistent general strike would be that a great many people would starve, and that the proletariat would probably starve first. Consequently many passages imply that the social myth is merely a beneficent illusion, a vision of something which can never happen. Myths, he says, are not "descriptions of things, but expressions of volitions." They are not 'utopias'; for "a utopia is comparable to an observed reality," and a myth is not. The imaginary world which the myth pictures is "placed in a future which has no determinate date in chronology; such a world may be regarded as being outside of time; it therefore in fact corresponds to the noumenon,"—the supersensible, non-temporal realm of being which still lingered as a last residuum of Platonism in the philosophy

of Kant. The expectations of the Jewish prophets and the early Christians, Sorel is fond of pointing out, were never, and could never have been, literally realized; the myths, the glowing pictures of that which was to be, which gave form to those expectations were none the less efficacious. Without its inextinguishable messianic anticipation, the Jewish race would scarcely have been that prodigy of history which it has been; without the belief that, before all who had heard the Master speak should taste of death, the tribes of the earth should see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, and sending forth his angels with a great sound of a trumpet to gather his elect from the four winds,—without this belief early Christianity could never have appealed as it did to the generation among whom it was first disseminated. Sorel neglects, however, to add that these hopes were not viewed as ‘myths’ by those who accepted them and were not preached by prophets who disbelieved their own prophecies. It appears dubious if Christian chiliasm would have greatly flourished if propagated by teachers who avowedly regarded their teaching merely as a useful fiction, and looked upon the tremendous descriptions of the Lord’s reappearing as exciting images which probably would never be realized.

Such are the Bergsonian elements in the philosophy which lies behind the movement of revolutionary syndicalism, as it has been set forth by its first and most original representative. These ideas, however, apparently no longer make up the philosophy of M. Sorel himself. Though new editions of his syndicalist writings continue to appear, it would seem that he is no longer a syndicalist. He has turned from the myth of the general strike to an older myth of singularly different character, that of the restoration of the Bourbons to their ancient throne. M. Sorel, in a word, is said to have become, within the last year or two, a royalist, and to be

now serving as the editor of a legitimist newspaper.⁷ The transformation, while striking, is less surprising than it might appear, and, indeed, was indicated as a likely outcome before it occurred, by a writer who has made a special study of the history of syndicalism. Neo-royalism and syndicalism have, after all, some very important things in common; a deep distrust of reason, a contempt for *bourgeois* democracy, a peculiar hatred for the catchwords, the ideas, and the aspirations characteristic of the eighteenth century and its great revolution, a yearning for some millennial age which is to be reached by a violent overturning of the present order, rather than by a patient, gradual improvement and readjustment of our existing institutions. And Sorel, whose liking, even while a syndicalist, for such opponents of rationalism as Pascal and Newman I have already remarked, doubtless finds in his new position a more congenial atmosphere than before for his sympathy with certain features of Catholic Christianity. The peculiarity of anti-intellectualism is that you cannot be sure where it will bring you out. What it leads you away from,—the sober austerities and the hard, slow achievements of the life of reason,—you know. But it is a road which soon forks, and there is at the turning no plain guide-post to point in the one direction rather than the other; all the clearly decipherable guide-posts have been left behind in the place you came from. And the one branch if followed to its extreme brings you to a position diametrically opposite to that which lies at the end of the other. Turn to the left, and you will finally find yourself led to an anti-rationalistic, irresponsible and sentimental radicalism; turn to the right, and you will find a still broader highway to an equally irresponsible reactionism. A broader highway, I say; for on the whole, experience

⁷ I have not seen M. Sorel's latest writings (he has apparently published no new book within the past year), and can report this only at second hand. Cf. the remarks of M. Ernest Dimnet, *Atlantic Monthly*, Jan., 1913, p. 27, and Mr. H. Chisholm in *The Britannica Year-Book*, 1913, p. 19.

seems to show that the tendency of anti-intellectualist movements to issue in traditionalism, in a revival of what had seemed beaten causes, is in the long run even stronger than their tendency to issue in an impatient zeal for revolutionary innovations. This was certainly shown to be the case in the eventual working out of the anti-intellectualism, the contempt for the commonplace and stubborn Understanding, of the Romanticists of the early nineteenth century. Romanticism, of course, had many and diverse results, good and bad; but the historic consequence which can with most certainty be ascribed to that large and vague but immensely important movement of thought, is the reinvigoration of certain old institutions and old faiths which in the eighteenth century had seemed about to disappear. Friedrich Schlegel's is the typical spiritual career of the *Romantiker*; and it was a career which, beginning with a conception of the Romantic ideal as that of constant incompleteness and endless Becoming, closed in medievalism, in a glorification of 'the ages of faith,' and in a devout acceptance of the unchanging dogmas of Mother Church. When a man appeals from the understanding to intuition in ethical and religious matters, he is very likely to find that, at the end, his intuitive insight strangely coincides with the beliefs of his grandfathers. And there are many signs, of late,—M. Sorel's progress from syndicalism to royalism is not the only one,—which go to show that the neo-romanticism of Bergson, while it has developed both a right and a left wing, inclines more strongly to the right than to the left. Even M. Chide, whose glorification of the god Proteus has already been mentioned, and who might naturally be supposed to represent the extreme left of Bergsonism, also sees in Bergson's anti-intellectualism a vindication of the great Catholic apologists,—Loyola, Pascal, Bossuet, even Joseph De Maistre,—nay, even Tertullian. "These theologians," he observes, "were marvellously penetrated long before M. Bergson by the fact of universal fluidity, of the strange solidarities which knit

all creatures together, of the possibility at every moment of a deviation from laws which have in them nothing fixed, nothing necessary." And M. Sorel, even when he was an aggressive revolutionary in his social doctrines, intimated that the new philosophy, in substituting a sort of cosmic indeterminism for the Cartesian mechanistic universe, had vindicated Pascal, whose grievance against Cartesianism was that it excluded God from the world (at least through its implications) by excluding miracle,—which (the phrase is M. Sorel's) "is a material experience of the divine presence." So Mrs. Hermann concludes her chapter on Bergson with the remark that "to believe in creative evolution is to believe in miracles." M. Bergson might appear to have excluded this last interpretation in advance by making 'matter' subject to rigid laws and introducing indetermination and the possibility of incomprehensible new modes of action only into the realm of life and consciousness. But I do not think it can be said that he has with any clearness and consistency precluded such applications of his philosophy of nature as those which, in the sentences quoted, Chide and Sorel have given. For the supposed relations of 'life' and 'matter' are, at best, left, in large measure, in extreme obscurity; meanwhile, it seems clear that 'life' is the primary and prepotent reality, and that it can to an undefined degree break through that incrustation of material rigidity which it has, at the same time, a strange propensity to form.

At all events, the most marked effect of the deep influence which Bergson's doctrine has had upon many Frenchmen of the younger generation,—not only through his books, but still earlier through his teaching at *École Normale*,—has, in the opinion of many observers, been to create an intellectual atmosphere in which, not, indeed, a staid conservatism, but emotional reactionisms of all sorts naturally flourish. Certainly,—at least to the alien looker-on,—a new mood seems of late, and rather suddenly, to have become dominant in the French mind.

And there is undeniable plausibility in the view of those who hold that the vogue of Bergsonism in France has been one of the real causes of this resurgence of the reactionary temper, of the contempt for 'analysis' and the impatience at steady-going constructive efforts in political and social reform, which seem to be the ruling fashions of the day.

We have, however, *à propos* of the general anti-intellectualism which has played a part both in Sorel's syndicalism and in his abandonment of it, been led to digress somewhat from the theme which is just now more properly our concern, namely, the ethical tendencies to which the conception of creative evolution gives rise. It is not alone in the syndicalist agitation that this conception has produced practically significant effects. In vaguer and simpler forms it is affecting many minds of our time and suggesting, though it cannot be said strictly to necessitate, certain moral attitudes congenial to it. A metaphysical proposition, being ostensibly a description of reality and not a prescription of an ideal, does not directly imply an ethics; it leaves the question what we *ought* to do, among the things which the nature of the universe permits us to do, logically untouched. But for all that, men naturally incline to derive, from a strikingly drawn picture of what the world really is and what is going on therein, intimations of what it is best worth while for them to be about. And the ethical consequence which many are likely to derive from the Bergsonian doctrine of creative evolution alone is doubtless a vague belief in the intrinsic desirability of constant but sequential change, a sort of generalized progressivism. Thus a writer in one of our popular magazines⁸ has described this philosophy in good American slang as the "deadly enemy of the stand-pat intellect in all its forms"; and he adds: "If I were interested in keeping churches, constitutions and customs fixed so that they would not

⁸ Mr. Walter Lippmann, in *The American Magazine*, 1912.

change, I should regard Bergson as the most dangerous man in the world. The spread of his teaching will put all institutions on the defensive." It is, however, a somewhat humorous commentary on this picture of M. Bergson as the arch-iconoclast, that the most methodical attempt thus far made to elaborate an ethical theory and a sociology, not merely upon Bergsonian principles, but upon this particular Bergsonian principle of creative evolution,—M. Joseph Wilbois's "*Devoir et Durée*,"—culminates in a defense of ultramontanist. M. Wilbois modestly professes to have attempted merely to apply the doctrine of "Creative Evolution" to the problems of society, to write a sort of continuation of that work in which the *élan vital* is traced through its later developments into an *élan humain* and an *élan moral*; his 'meta-sociology' is thus simply "a generalization, or a carrying out in detail, of the plan of Bergson." But the execution of this plan, though it gives us, by the way, a number of sound and sensible remarks on questions of ethics and of moral education, brings us at last to the conclusions that "in social matters, free examination is worse than a crime, it is an error of method," since it substitutes the analytic process of the intellect for the immediacy of intuition; that the intuitive experience of the Christian life is mediated through a supernatural society which must be hierarchically organized; that "the sole depository of the divine action" in this society, "is he who lives by the very rhythm of the Church, that is to say its central organ," the Pope; and that the faithful do well to hold their intellects off even from historical inquiries about the origin and development of dogmas, so little has "this evolution of formulas and of interpretations of them in the artificial time of the historians in common with the life of a society such as the Church." The case of M. Wilbois is one more piece of evidence of the fact that the preponderant, though by no means the only, result of the influence of Bergsonism upon contemporary society has been to give new courage to obscur-

antism in all its forms and all its degrees. But we have not yet noted that version of the Bergsonian intuition,—the sixth and last of those we are to consider,—which is perhaps the most aptly fitted of all to serve this end.

(6) When M. Bergson consents to explain in more concrete terms what is meant by the intuitively verified proposition that real time is 'indivisible,' he frequently construes it as signifying the obliteration of the usual distinction between past and present. If moments 'interpenetrate,' then what are called past moments are not only as real, but also as truly present, as that limited fraction of the past which, because of the exigencies of action, we artificially single out as 'the present.' "To regard the past as non-existent is an illusion,—an illusion useful, and even needful, for the life of action, but dangerous in the highest degree for speculation."⁹ Thus in the deeper self to which the intuitive experience enables us to penetrate, all our past is conserved without loss. Consciousness, in its true nature, is memory, and *perfect* memory. If, now, the implications of this version of the intuition are carried out, it follows that reality is after all a highly 'conservative system' (somewhat in the physicist's sense). Though there is always a small increment of novelty, the old vastly and increasingly preponderates over the new; the volume of the cosmic snowball (to use one of Bergson's favorite figures) is not chiefly composed of fresh snow. Take from this doctrine the cue for an ethical teaching, and you will get a 'conservative system' in something other than the physicist's sense. The Bergsonian intuition, in short, suggests even more naturally the view that the ideals and institutions of the past are sacred and unalterable, than the view that they are obsolete and negligible. It sanctions a generalized traditionalism still more characteristically than a generalized progressivism.¹⁰

⁹ "La perception du changement," 1911, p. 30.

¹⁰ I say "still more characteristically," because the theory of the imperishability, in 'real duration,' of the past is the premise from which

This is one of the aspects of Bergsonism which appear especially to appeal to M. Edouard LeRoy, one of Bergson's most interesting disciples and expositors. M. LeRoy is,—or at all events was, before the promulgation of the papal encyclical *Pascendi gregis*,—a lay Roman Catholic theologian of modernist sympathies. His principal publication, before his book on Bergson, was a volume of connected essays, “Dogme et critique” (1907), in which he endeavored to use the distinction between intellect and action as a basis for a reconciliation of the claims of reason and those of ecclesiastical authority.¹¹ Of a religion without authoritative dogmas imposed upon the acceptance of the faithful, M. LeRoy was apparently unable to conceive; but he was also unable to conceive how any external authority could make a man's intelligence “regard an argument as sound which he finds to be feeble, or a conception as meaningful which to him is devoid of sense.” The solution of the difficulty, then, must consist in giving to the dogmas of the church an exclusively moral and practical significance. The church has authority over action; and its dogmas must be accepted as true so far as they are pertinent to action. But they need not be accepted as intellectually true. By means of this semi-pragmatistic distinction, M. LeRoy was able to give to the doctrines which he specifically dis-

the doctrine of the creative freedom of each present moment is inferred. The new moment is novel, and therefore free, precisely because it contains all the past, and something more; it constitutes as a whole a *sum* which never before existed. (Here, again, we must carefully forget part of Bergson's doctrine.) If, on the contrary, any of the past lapsed, one could not be sure that the new moment was not a repetition of a sum of content which had already been realized. A constant accumulation without loss is the one type of process in which mere repetition is absolutely precluded. But the more proper inference from this account of ‘duration’ would seem to be, not that the new moment is wholly novel in its content, but merely that by it a small measure of novelty is added to an incomparably greater mass of unchangeable content coming from the past.

¹¹ This book has been condemned by the ecclesiastical censorship. The condemnation has been accepted by the author in such a manner that the incident (says the author of the article ‘Modernism’ in *The Catholic Encyclopædia*) involves “no reflection on the catholicity of M. LeRoy.”

cussed,—those of the personality of God, of the resurrection, and of the real presence in the Eucharist,—a status scarcely less dubious and illusive than that which M. Sorel's 'social myths' finally assume.

If (which is dubious) there is any possible view which is not Bergsonian, this would appear to be such a view. For it radically separates intellect and action, upon the familiar plan of water-tight compartments in the mind; while Bergson defines 'intellect' as existing solely for the sake of action. It is not, at any rate, the conception for which M. LeRoy finds encouragement in Bergson's philosophy. It is rather for a deference to tradition, for a conviction of the importance of maintaining unbroken one's "historic continuity" with the past. He writes:

To live is, indeed, according to the new philosophy, to be always creating something new; but 'new,' be it understood, in the sense of an augmentation and progression in relation to what has gone before. Life, in a word . . . is an ascent upon the path of increasing spiritualization. Such, at least, is its deep aspiration, the primary tendency which first produced and still animates it. . . . Does not this undeniable fact, when once recognized, awaken in us the surmise of an immanent law directing all the effort of life . . . operating, no doubt, by no fatal and mechanical necessity, but at each moment defining itself better and marking a direction of progress? . . . And thus, according to the new philosophy, all the past survives forever in us, and through us issues in action. . . . The law immanent in life is, as it were, a call for an unending transcendence of one's present self. Before this future, which lies beyond present experience, whence shall we draw the strength to inspire us? Is there not room to ask whether there have not already appeared here and there in the course of history intuitions which illumine for us with a prophetic light the obscure road of the future? Here would be the point of insertion of the religious problem in the new philosophy.¹²

Of the philosophy of religion which M. LeRoy regards as properly following from this aspect of the philosophy of real duration he gives only a hint; but it would seem, from the passage quoted, to be one which would emphasize not merely the importance of continuity in moral and religious evolution, but also the value of tradition,

¹² Une philosophie nouvelle: Henri Bergson, 1912; English translation by V. Benson, 1913.

and would readily find room for a doctrine of the irreversibility of already formulated dogmas. It would thus be a philosophy favorable to the general religious position which M. LeRoy had previously taken, and an especially suitable Bergsonian basis for the thorough-going ultramontanist of M. Wilbois.

Such appear to be the practical tendencies of 'the new philosophy' which have thus far manifested themselves.¹³ To impute to M. Bergson himself all the consequences which his disciples have deduced from his teaching would, of course, be unjust, especially in view of the fact that some of these disciples have not so much learned their ethical opinions from him as found in his philosophy a convenient armory of weapons for the defense of opinions already adopted. Yet for some part of these results M. Bergson clearly is responsible. He is responsible for the common assumption of these divergent doctrines, that the chief end of man is to experience the "intuition of real duration." He is responsible for defining that intuition in ways so obscure, so various and so contradictory that the most incongruous interpretations of its nature may equally claim the sanction of his words. He is responsible for the pervasive irrationalism which runs through all these interpretations. It is true that he has himself protested that it is not that he loves the intellect less but intuition more, that he has no practical hostility to the temper and methods of science. These protests give evidence of a creditable striving to attain philosophic catholicity and to be all things to all men. In their more extreme expressions they contradict, but they do not effectually alter, the prevailing tendency of his teaching; anti-intellectualism is, as we saw at the beginning of these studies, logically too deep-seated in his philosophy, and the craving

¹³ Through lack of space I am prevented from discussing the curious account of the theological implications of his metaphysics which M. Bergson gives in his much talked about letters to Father de Tonquédec ("Études par des Pères de la Compagnie de Jésus," 130, p. 515.)

for some mystically direct and ineffable access to the heart of things apparently is too irrepressible in his temperament, to be dispelled by a few constrained contradictions. He is one of those teachers,—teachers always assured of an enthusiastic welcome,—who offer, not a disciplinary regimen, but a wonder-working nostrum, to an eager and impatient generation

Crying aloud for an opiate boon,
To comfort the human want,
From the bosom of magical skies.

It is, of course, true that the abstraction to which Bergson vaguely refers as ‘the intellect,’ is neither the whole of human life nor the sole source of human values. That it is not, is no new discovery; mankind, and even philosophers, did not need to await our age to learn that concepts are not identical with the things conceived nor thinking about life the same as living it. Among our contemporaries, it was not the author of “Creative Evolution” who gave vivacious expression to this truism in the remark that “reality is not an unearthly ballet of bloodless categories.” It is, however, possible for most people to acknowledge all this without supposing that reason, or even the ‘analytic understanding,’ by their very natures falsify reality and are excluded from the type of human experience which is of highest worth. But both these implications are patent in the Bergsonian doctrine of the superiority of intuition. His anti-intellectualism (it is well to repeat) is wholly different in temper from that of pragmatism. This essentially sentimental intuitionism, with its depreciation of ‘the life of action,’ and the pragmatic voluntarism, are antipodal in spirit and in practical tendency.

Finally, it is the philosophy of M. Bergson himself and not merely that of his disciples, which must be considered responsible for that backward-turning habit of thought which so ill agrees with the conception of ‘creative evolution.’ That conception seems to me to have value both

as a cosmological hypothesis and as the hint of a moral ideal and a religious interpretation of life. M. Bergson was in no sense the originator of it, but he has given it greatly increased currency. He has, however, combined it with another conception which robs it of nearly all value and meaning; namely, with the conception of the deepest insight and the greatest good as consisting in a "return to the immediate,"—in all those strange performances described by terms beginning with *re*,—to which his pages constantly invite us. In this (as in certain other respects which I have elsewhere pointed out) his doctrine is profoundly at war with itself; but the side of it which appears to me to be dominant and chiefly characteristic is its negative and retrogressive side. In the appealing name of 'creative evolution' we are practically invited to go back to the primitive, to lapse into a 'self' which is 'deeper' precisely because it is rudimentary and sub-rational, to return to the rock of the pit whence we were digged. But this is hardly the direction in which a genuinely temporalistic moralist should be expected to face. The 'immediate,'—at least the sort of immediate from which we have emerged,—should, to such a moralist, seem precisely the part of our life which it is most imperative for us to transcend. One of our English poets has understood far better than Bergson the relative place and value which a truly evolutionary and humanistic philosophy should assign to 'the immediate' and to 'the intellect.' To George Meredith, too, life is unceasing becoming, and men the children of an ever-travailing Mother; but to these her chosen she has given

brain, her prize of gifts,
Sky of the senses! on which height,
Not disconnected, yet released,
They see how spirit comes to light,
Through conquest of the inner beast,
Which Measure tames to movement sane . . .
Never is earth misread by brain:
That is the welling of her, there
The mirror. . . .

Her children of the laboring brain,
These are the champions of the race,
True parents, and the sole humane,
With understanding for their base.

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ENGLISH DIVORCE LAW AND THE REPORT OF THE ROYAL COMMISSION.

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THAT English law in relation to Divorce stands in need of amendment is very generally admitted. It has grown up haphazard, in the interest of the ruling classes, and bears no relation to the needs of the people at large. Until 1857 a decree of divorce could only be obtained by a lengthy process, culminating in a private act of Parliament, and costing from £500 to £600. In 1857 the jurisdiction previously exercised by the Ecclesiastical Court was transferred, and is now exercised by the High Court of Justice in the Probate, Divorce, and Admiralty Division. The causes for which divorce is granted are briefly: to the husband on the ground of adultery on the part of the wife; to the wife on the ground of aggravated adultery, or adultery coupled with cruelty or with desertion for two years and upwards on the part of the husband.

On three main points all members of the Commission which has recently reported were agreed. The first is, that the form of procedure necessary to obtain a divorce still tells very heavily,—almost prohibitively,—against the poor. Cases can be tried only before the High Court sitting in London, and that at a cost which makes it practically impossible for the great majority of people. The average minimum cost of an undefended case from London is stated to be about £40 to £45, and considerably higher if from the country; while the cost of an ordinary